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The Honorable John B. Larson
U.S. House of Representatives

Written Statement for the House Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation & Public Lands

Hearing on HR 437, the Coltsville Study Act

April 8, 2003

As the sponsor of the House version of the Coltsville Study Act, HR 437, I would like to thank the Committee for allowing me to speak this afternoon on an issue of importance to my constituents and to the historic preservation of an important American landmark of achievement. I would also like to thank the rest of my delegation colleagues here in the House, Representatives DeLauro, Johnson, Shays, and Simmons, for their support of this proposal, as well as Senator Dodd and Senator Lieberman, for their support and leadership on this issue in the Senate.

Specifically, the Coltsville Study Act would direct the National Park Service to study the site commonly known as "Coltsville," and its surrounding area within the City of Hartford, Connecticut to evaluate its national significance, suitability, and feasibility for designation as a unit of the National Park System. It also asks the National Park Service to evaluate the importance of the area to the history of precision manufacturing.

Last June the National Park Service testified before the Senate Energy and National Resources Subcommittee on National Parks in support of the Senate version of the legislation authorizing this study. Later today you will be hearing from a representative from the National Park Service about the version of the Coltsville Study Act before you today.

The Coltsville region of Hartford Connecticut is comprised of approximately 260 acres of land. The region is anchored by the 17-Acre Coltsville Heritage Park, which houses 10 historic buildings. Bordered by Interstate-91, The Connecticut River, the central business district of Hartford, the Museum of Connecticut State History, as well as the State Capitol, Coltsville represents a region rich in culture and history.

The history of Coltsville is a unique regional & international landmark characterized by its many industrial achievements during the industrial revolution. Beginning with Samuel and Elizabeth Colt, founders of Colt Manufacturing Company, known for the production of firearms, the Colt's inspired the entire community to flourish during the industrial revolution. Coltsville is noted for its Victorian mansions, an open green area, botanical gardens, and even a deer park. The residence of Samuel and Elizabeth Colt in Hartford, CT, known as "Armsmead", is a national historic landmark, and the distinctive Colt manufacturing factory's blue dome is a prominent feature in the Hartford, Connecticut skyline.

When you look deeper at the county one begins to see the unique and holistic community that developed in the area and attracted early industrial leaders such as Col. Albert Pope of Pope Manufacturing who produced the nation's most prominent bicycles and automobiles, which ultimately bloomed into what we now know as Pratt and Whitney located in East Hartford. Henry Ford, was drawn to the community because of his interest in learning about the innovative manufacturing techniques and equipment being invented and developed in Coltsville.

It is important to emphasize that the Colt legacy is not just about firearms, but also about industrial innovation and the development of technology that would change the way of life in the United States. Mr. Colt worked with Samuel Morse in the development of the telegraph, and Colt manufacturing contributed to the development of technology in many ways, inspiring the jet engine pioneers Francis Pratt and Amos Whitney, who served as apprentices at Colt manufacturing. The influence of the community was extended overseas when Samuel Colt became the first individual in the United States to open a manufacturing plant overseas.

It is also the story of Elizabeth Colt and of women entrepreneurs of the early industrial age, as she successfully and profitably guided Colt Industries for more than 40 years after Samuel Colt's death in 1862.

Coltsville set the standard for excellence during the Industrial Revolution and continues to prove significant as a place in which people of the United States can learn about that important period in history and its association with the Mark Twain House, Trinity College, Old North Cemetery, and many historic homesteads and architecturally renowned buildings.

This legislation and its overwhelming local support and excitement signifies that we are starting on the road to developing and cultivating Coltsville's history and its importance to Hartford and the State of Connecticut. The Senate version of this legislation, S. 233, was approved by unanimous consent on March 4, 2003. Along with other members of the delegation and the community, I am committed to preserving the area's immeasurable historical value. Coltsville is a unique regional and international landmark. I look forward to seeing the immense potential that the property holds fully utilized.